Adamantine Alice and the Famed Debutante's Despair Engage in a Little Drama All Their Own.

COURTING

BY DOROTHY SPEARE

"ARE you engaged?" The man put his question with that charming lack of ceremony only possible when one has just met, and is flirting with, the girl for the evening.

The girl shrugged her shoulders with that candor which is only possible when one is morally certain one will never see the man again after the close of the dance, and murmured, "Oh, no!"—faint satisfaction clouding her utterance.

"That's a nice way to talk," grumbled the man.

She looked at him, and demanded: "Well—are you engaged?"

"No, sir!" he responded, and lighted a cigarette with emphasis.

She laughed in merriment that rose instead of abating. "That's a nice way to talk!"

He put down his cigarette and looked at her with new appreciation. "You pack a mean wallop," he decided.

From the country club piazza their location was unquestionably romantic. The younger set who came out on the piazza to breathe between dances would say that they had possibilities. The older set would merely sigh and repeat their familiar blatancies about how-wonderful-was youth-under-the-moon-and-oh-to-be-there-again!

The critical youth of the day, however, was too keen to enjoy a situation until that situation should be tried and tested. So, although they sat beneath a moon that poured hinting light and shade over the golf links in front of them and the little woody lane at one side, they looked at each other in cool stock-taking, and were hardly aware that June appealed all about them.

It was an interesting step in the evening's formula. He had been presented early in the evening, and had kept in touch with her since then, making lordly invasions from the stag line, and rushing just enough other girls to keep interest uncertain. There was nothing large and crude about his method of attack; and a girl always appreciates finesse, although at times she might not like it too well.

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THEY had finally condescended to waste some of the delirious music and sit out and talk. This was arrived at by the simple and direct method of hitting one full in the face. He had said:

"Look here, you're interesting; come on—we'll sit this out."

And she, following him, had murmured: "Thank you too much! If you get boring, we return. If not, we do anyway."

They had been tilting with words for ten minutes. She was more beautiful and less striking than the popular ballroom type. Her gown accented her face instead of her face accenting her gown. She wore her looks, her clothes, her line, with an indifference that killed in different ways and directions. That same indifference had netted her the nickname of "Adamantine Alice," by which she had been known at most eastern points of collegiate interests a little earlier in her career. But she was now twenty-three—unofficially. She had passed the dead-line. Seven years of fame and fortune was all any girl had a right to expect from the colleges nowadays. And she had been adamantine a little too long.

He was very tall and resentfully good-looking; and he, too, had a revealing nickname. He was known quite generally as the "debutante's despair."

Their paths had been parallel and never had met in the course of their activities. They knew nothing of each other save what they were discovering by thrust and parry. But she was beginning to realize that he must have a title that somewhat approached her own.

He was smoking steadily now, regarding her as steadily from behind his cigarette glow. She became impatient. Men always could pass off an awkward or delicate or interesting situation by twirling with a cigarette. Gone were the days when girls twirled a kerchief or fan, and cast down their eyes, in "situations."

"Give me a light," she said abruptly.

The two smoked and looked at each other.

He spoke softly. "You have very beautiful arms," he said.

She rose and crushed her cigarette beneath her silver heel. "I'm going back," she said. "I ought to have known, if I sat out as much as ten minutes with a man, that he'd have to repeat himself."

There was a fraction of a pause while he wildly tried to remember what he had said in the course of their tourney. She watched him with something that almost approached a leer of triumph. Girls often remember conversation in detail, while few are the men who can retrace their rhetorical steps with any degree of accuracy. He had not happened to repeat this particular remark, but she must disconcert somehow.

His recovery was magnificent. Taking her arm with wide assurance, he branched off into new territory. "We're not going back until we look at the moon—that is, unless you're afraid to compare yourself with her radiance."

She allowed her steps to be guided over the links, where the moon blazed down upon them. "How like a man, to call the moon a woman," she mused; and still neither of them looked at the subject of their conversation. "You know perfectly well the moon's a man."

"Perhaps you're right," he agreed, and she looked at him suspiciously, it came. "No woman would stay up there alone all the time, without a man."

She stopped and lighted another cigarette to conceal her irritation. "I suppose women have given you cause to think that way."

She turned on the links, and started back; he followed, unmistakably peevish. Suddenly her glaze of calm was broken. She looked at him in fierce resentment, and cried out: "Oh—I—wish—men—weren't—all—alike! Seven years of going up against it—and I'm sick of it! Don't you ever get sick—of taking different girls on?"

He regarded her in mild surprise. She was certainly breaking. "There is something," he said, judicially, "something in the touch of a strange hand——"

Her walk became swifter, more purposeful. She reached the steps of the country club piazza, and mounted them hastily, upsetting various couples seated in the shadows. He was out of breath when he joined her at the door; she was again calm, indifferent, maddeningly glacee. With the resiliency of youth they leaped to the subject of modern marriage, as they moved off into the surging billows of the dance.

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SOME one cut in, and she breathed a sigh of relief calculated to reach his ears. He stalked away with perfunctory thanks thrown behind him. She smiled delightedly upon the young man who had relieved him, and overwhelmed him with a dizzying broadside of chatter that would have deceived no girl.

The truth of the matter was that the evening had slumped sickeningly. She was bored with the week end house party of which she was a member. There has to be at least one piquant man to rush one, at a party, however small the party; otherwise, wherefore born? Alice could remember parties where she could not count the number of "rushers" who brought zest and tang into the evening; but as one grew older, fewer and fewer men could arouse the fresh, youthful enthusiasm of one's girlhood.

"You were gone a long time with Bob Norton," the youth in whose arms she was bitterly reflecting declared, not without suggestion.

"People make such bright remarks!" she rejoined. "You have on a white tie tonight, haven't you?"

He subsided, and she glared at the orchestra, in silent prayer that they would come through with the "Home Again Blues."

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THE real business of a dance does not begin until it is over. In Mary Lee Cobb's mahogany and pink boudoir the two girls sat and cold-creamed their faces and storaged their hair in curlers and talked over everything worth mentioning. Especially interesting it is, always, to find out which men have given the same identical lines to house party roommates, which rouge best stands the test of an evening's wear, which line has proven most effective in whipping up the jaded interest of the stags.

Alice and Mary Lee went over almost everything. The same youth had asked each of them to go out and sit in his car; Mary Lee had had a fight with the young man to whom she was reported to be "almost engaged" because she was weary of the stigma those two words cast upon her and anxious to seek pastures new; Alice had become bored with the stripling who had been allotted to her for the week end.

Mary Lee had her glittering hair wrapped into little knobs all over her head before she sighed and voiced a poignant truth:

"Alice, I wonder why it is that all the attractive men are the ones you don't see much of."

Alice stopped smearing magic grower over her already well developed eyelashes and raised a sticky forefinger for emphasis. "Mary Lee, you're wandering into the point! I get so sick of meeting men—on week ends like this or at—at dances—men who live at the ends of the earth—men that you'll never see again—and liking them—and dragging a good time along—and then saying good-bye! My life," Adamantine Alice proclaimed, and surveyed her classic profile in Mary Lee's hand mirror, "is one long succession of good-byes!"

"You're knocking the nail in," Mary Lee agreed. "It's only the little weirs and poor goophers that tag you along with specials and candy and telegrams. The other kind—well, it's just, 'It's been awfully nice to know you! hope I see you again some time.' And there you are—or aren't!"

The two battle-scarred veterans were gloomily silent, thinking of the might-have-beens that haunt every girl's maiden meditation. Alice was the first to speak.

"If a man meets a girl and falls for her, he's got all the right and chance to follow it up, even if she doesn't live in the same place. He can make her know him better. Seven years' study of this thing has convinced me that proximity turns the trick. But if a girl meets a man and falls for him, what can she do but simper and say good-bye when the time comes?"

Mary Lee turned slowly and focused an inquiring gaze on her mate-at-arms. She found there a halt of words and a rush of color.

"Alice—Beverly!" she cried, then became quiet, the more convincingly to level her accusation. "I knew that something was gummed somewhere when you didn't drop a word about moonlighting with Bob Norton! You don't mean to say that you—you, after all this time! If you've fallen for him, dear old Adamantine, it's seven years wasted—that's all I can write as your epitaph!"

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ALICE became even more self-betraying. "Why—what do you mean? What's the matter with him?"

"Matter? Nothing. The matter's with you. He's the most attractive man within reach, but he isn't within reach. He killed every one off in college—his quotation in the yearbook was: 'I've 'ad my pickin' of sweethearts, and twelve of the lot was prime.' Well, and now he's at Harvard Medical. You konw how much chance any one has of getting a medical student down to brass tacks. And he—well, he's just like quicksilver when it comes to nailing him down."

Mary Lee took breath, and studied Alice's face, beautiful despite layers of cold-cream and a frame of electric wavers. Strange, she had never noticed before how stubborn that face could be.

"You know," Alice mused, "tramps leave their marks and signals on the houses they have tried, showing whether the people there are charitably inclined, or fierce dog, or poor pickin's. It's too bad that girls can't leave marks on men that same way."

"Well, no girl can leave a mark on Bob Norton," said Mary Lee, and yawned, thus deliberately showing lack of sympathy.

Alice's slightly shadowed black eyes glinted, as if, far off, a trumpet blew—as if in the distance she heard a battle-cry. "I am going to leave my mark on him," she said quietly. "The first man in seven years has made me want to. If I can't, Mary Lee, I'll agree with you; it's seven years dumped into the ash barrel."

It was nearly 5 o'clock, and Mary Lee was beginning to lose the pep that had been born through a coffee jag around midnight. It seemed to her that her battle-companion was losing what was most necessary to girls of their age and appearance and experience—point of view.

"Don't go to pieces, old dear," she said tragically. The tragedy was a hang-over from the coffee jag, but neither girl stopped to think of that. "I wouldn't lose my form and blow, for any beau ideal living."

Alice did not answer, and the two girls slumped into the twin beds, each expecting the other to turn out the lights. Once in, they lay there peevishly, their dance-weary limbs refusing to stir, the lights beating upon their exhausted eyeballs.

"Besides," Mary Lee argued, as if in answer to a remark of Alice's, "he's in Boston and you're in New York. I don't see how you're going to work it."

"I'm sick of what New York offers a girl," said Alice drowsily. "Hanging around the telephone all day, waiting for it to ring——"

Mary Lee turned her head on the pillow and looked at Alice, to see if a personal hit was intended here. But Alice had closed her eyes and was either asleep or determined to appear so. Her tight eyelids were hopelessly adamantine.

Mary Lee swore, and got up and turned off the lights.

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NOTHING was more boring than staging the wedding act over and over again. Bob Norton could remember when being asked to usher was a thrill, but that had been in the exuberant days of his youth. Now, surfeited with smiles and tears and hints and lines, he had determined to duck the dance the evening before Betty Berry's wedding.

In the first place, Betty was an old almost-flame of his who had come as near getting him, he thought gloomily, as any one ever had. She really had almost pulled it off. Well, she had grown tired of it and moved on, hauled in his roommate out of the wet and had the poor fish gasping for air in no time. Rather clever little person, Betty. He permitted himself a faint smile, as he remembered.

Of course, one could hardly refuse to stand up with one's old roommate, when he got in a tight corner like that. All the same, it was a bit stiff when you think of all the festivities that were involved. Much could be saved one by hard-luck tales of the study-racked medical aspirant; but there was no avenue or even alley that led away from the dinner for the wedding party, the evening before. Being in the wedding party, one naturally showed up at the dinner.

He flattered himself that his man-of-the-world aplomb covered his abysmal disgust as he sat and listened to a this-season's debutante cheep about how tired she was from her first day in at Miss Garland's school, where they learned to cook and everything.

The minute a girl learned to cook, she told every man she knew. It was just another of the traps that girls hung out. He knew them all, by this time. A man in his position had been in a way to find out much.

What was the matter with all the girls nowadays, anyway? They didn't even give man time enough to decide what he was trying to think about. They called you up all the time; they talked the rest of the time. They asked you to take them to dances; they were forever inviting you to dinner at their homes, where the old man gave you cigars you were afraid to smoke, and the mother (almost always a depressing spectacle of what the daughter would be in a few years) talked about a thousand little things daughter was doing that didn't interest you in the least.

He had gone to the root of the matter—being in a position to. In a word, the girls were overrunning everything.

In the first place, they ran a man off his feet, rushing him. Second place, they ran him ragged staying out until three or four or more, when one had a nine-o'clock each morning. And worst of all, they thought they could run themselves, as well as the man. That was the crowning absurdity. Ever since the world began, men had run it and looked after the women. In his profoundest of thoughts, Bob called the girl of today a menace.

Statistics proved that women were overrunning the world. There were a sixth more women than men in the world. Bob felt that that superfluous sixth was all after him.

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AS dinner sagged along, determination to duck the dance became more fervent. If only Betty didn't live in Deadham-near Boston. Deadham was right. Home of all of Boston society who were too comatose to live in town for the winter! A suburb that was not a suburb, but a resting place! By the time you got from one estate to the next you thought you had reached another town.

"THERE'S NO OTHER WAY," SHE TOSSED AT HIM. "WE'LL HAVE TO GO AND SIT IN SALLY'S CAR"

He was tired of the ranks of debutantes that paraded themselves for inspection every season. And the Deadham variety was terrible—a combination of Bostonian get-up and a sweet-young-girl line that they worked down to the dregs. Betty's wedding party was typical. It seemed as if Betty had arranged it so that no one would bother to look at any one but the bride. Well, girls would be girls.

False hope—he couldn't escape! The dance was being thrown at the Country Club—thrown in a large way. By the time they got there the orchestra was singing and reeling and clogging up and down the stage that should always be saved for a really good outfit of saxophone artists.

Downstairs Bob seized upon the extra man. Thank the Lord, Betty Berry always had an extra man trailing somewhere, this being one of the first principles of the successful girl.

"Look here, I'm not going to last over. Will you take on the piece of spun sugar they handed me—or won't you?"

Pete Price, a neat, plastered-looking youth, who could not be conceived of in any way save drifting around in a staglike manner, looked appalled, his eyebrows shooting up on his blank forehead. "Oh, now listen, Bob! I can't look after a girl a whole evening; I wanta smoke! Besides, there's a perfect knockout staying with Sally Parsons, and I told her I'd show her some time tonight."

Bob abandoned the plan of direct appeal. "Well, anyway, you'll cut in on me, won't you?" he assumed. "Then I can break away and introduce some people to her. This girl doesn't know anybody—she goes to cooking school."

His plan was still the same. Once the plastered Pete cut in on Miss Cooking School, Bob was going to steal silently away like the Arabs. It would serve Pete right for not obliging a fellow.

The floor was crowded by the time the bridal party assorted themselves and the ushers danced the right bridesmaids off. Bob took his little prize package up and down in front of the stag line, that being about the most pointed thing a man could do. He droned along at intervals on the I-am-so-young. You-are-so-beautiful line, to keep the poor girl from hysterics at being stuck with him for so long. He really was kind-hearted and he knew that girls suffered at such moments. But he kept the off corner of one eye on Pete, who stood restfully leaning up against the wall and surveyed the dance, mouth open, eyes critically vacant.

Pete finally started, moved swiftly away. Bob's heart gave a sickening thud. The little snide was going in the wrong direction! Madly he steered his old man of the sea around to one side, the better to view Pete's perfidy.

Pete was cutting in on a tall, dark girl who was more beautiful and less striking than the popular ballroom type. She was all in glittering white sequins, from which her face challenged—a face that was reminiscently disdainful—a face that called to mind a singular and unusual rebuff. Something that had piqued him at the time, but which he had felt beneath his dignity to follow up because of that same rebuff.

He missed a step, which threw Miss Cooking School out of gear, and for a few minutes they breathlessly climbed over one another's ankles. He snapped, "My fault!" in a murderous tone. The debutante was following his glance.

"Oh, there's the girl that's visiting Sally Parsons!" she twittered. "She was quite famous when she was young, they say. They used to call her Adamantine Alice, because she has a perfect record of never falling for any man."

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ANOTHER member of the wedding party, who had been relieved, mercifully intervened here, leaving Bob still faint from the suspense of the darkest hour before dawn. He walked weakly to the stag line. He was going to duck; but first he'd just see how things were going.

A moment later found him cutting in on the tall girl with the disdainful face.

"Do you remember me?" he kicked himself for saying, as no spark of recognition lit up her rather tired eyes.

"Of course I remember you," she responded without animation. "I never forget men. We met, hated and parted, in Rye, last June, at a country club dance."

This sudden resume so startled him that he could not fling out his usual swift attack. He had to hedge. "You—uh—you're visiting Sally Parsons? For how long?"

She did not look at him. "I don't know yet," she said evenly.

A young man from the stag line had been chasing them around the room. She paused at one of the exits, and suddenly became intense.

"Will you—will you come out on the piazza with me—for a moment?" she implored. Dumbfounded, he nodded, and steered her through the door before the pursuing youth could reach them. Had she, or had she not, seen that invasion threatened? If she had, her act was certainly quick and clever, but he could not reconcile it with her phlegmatic attitude.

There were several couples twosing on the porch. There always are. She looked around swiftly and went down the steps. Perforce he followed. "There's no other way," she tossed at him over her well-turned shoulder; "we'll have to go and sit in Sally's car."

He almost staggered under that suggestions, recalling certain little advances and retrogressions under a June moon. It was now late September, but the moon was full again. Could she——

She was not settled in the car before she pulled a package of cigarettes from the bosom of her dress, lighted one and inhaled fiercely. "There!" she sighed. "If I'd had to go any longer without one, I'd have danced a Highland fling up on the stage with the orchestra!"

"What the——" he complained.

She looked at him, as if she had just remember that he was along. "Oh—I suppose you don't understand! Fact is, I—well, I might as well tell you, because I'll probably never see you again after tonight."

He felt an odd surge of resentment on this. She was still inhaling, rather better than most girls. A shade too well, perhaps. In common with most men, he did not like to see a girl get what a man got out of a smoke.

"I might as well tell you," she went on in her impersonal voice, "that it's gotten to the point where the cigarettes run me rather than me running the cigarettes. I didn't realize how far along I was until I came down here to Boston, where the girls don't smoke in the open so much, and some people are actually shocked by it. Why, for Sally's sake I don't dare let myself be seen on the porch with a cigarette in my mouth, or I'll be pointed out as Sally's wild friend from New York."

She laughed and the cigarette in her mouth bobbed up and down. The laugh turned into a cough; she threw the cigarette over the side of the automobile and continued coughing.

It was pathetic to see so much indifferent beauty intense over cigarettes, and bent double by the tearing of their incense at her lungs. It was more pathetic when the girl righted herself and lit another.

He felt gravely concerned, all of a sudden, and as if he had known her for a long time.

"Why don't you stop?" he suggested, trying to speak as impersonally as she. "It's poor stuff to let anything get a hold on you. That cough—a cough's always bad. And it's a fact that smoking hits a woman harder than it does a man."

"How do you know so much?" she flashed and pulled on her little necessity with redoubled vigor.

He straightened in quiet, but, he was sure, unobtrusive importance. "I happen to be studying medicine," he said. "I'm interested, in that sort of thing."

"Oh," she said, clearly surprised; she even took the cigarette out of her mouth for a moment, and looked at it absently. "You're a medical student? I didn't know you did anything so serious."

This last had quite a kick, but he passed it over as she began smoking again nervously—very nervously.

"I say, I wish you wouldn't do that? Not now, anyhow!"

"Why not?" she demanded, sending up perfect clouds into his face.

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HE felt foolish. One of the reasons of his past success had been that he always stopped when he began to feel foolish. Of course, the really great art was to stop before that. But this time the sight of smoke pouring from mouth, nose and eyes of such beauty in distress was too much for him. He hurled himself on.

"Why? Because I can't bear to see you in such a fix—that's why! Listen. Don't you want to stop?"

"I suppose I ought to—if I've gotten this way about it," she sighed, and threw away her cigarette to light another. He watched her sadly. She had all the little dope-fiend gestures. Her hand shook now until her match went out. He took the matches away from her and threw them out of the car, which brought an angry exclamation that he ignored.

"Look here, Alice Beverly," he snapped, "I'm not going to see a perfectly good girl make a fool of herself in this particular way. You're going to hang off. See?"

She sighed wearily and tilted the unlit cigarette between her lips. "Oh, piffle! Here I thought you were one man at this dead-head party who'd be decent about the fix I'm in!"

"Decent!"

Bob had leaped over the dam and was sliding down the falls. Once at least to every man the rapids foam below.

"Decent! Listen here, Alice—you admit you want to stop?"

"Oh, I'll admit anything! Bring back those matches."

"You want to stop? All right. Now, if you'll be good enough to give me some of your time, I'll give you some of mine and show you how to work this thing out."

She flounced pettishly on the seat beside him, bit her cigarette in halves and spat it away. "Old line! Beatrice Fairfax would say: 'No, Algernon, do not marry the girl. What she would not do for a lover she never will do for a husband.'"

"You won't get anywhere with yourself by being flip," he said coldly.

"Who wants to get anywhere with themselves? Give me those matches and go away and leave me alone!"

He seized her restless hand. It grew quiet in his, but seemed to pass along its "nerves" to him.

"Listen to me." He spoke in what he believed to be brutal tones. "You are going to stop. Tomorrow morning I'm coming around to Sally's and take you out for a game of golf. We'll leave the matches behind."

"I don't know how to play golf, and I promised myself I'd never learn."

He was momentarily shaken, but came back grandly. "I will teach you."

It was almost as momentous a step as the signing of the armistice. But he, watching her, was annoyed to see that she was not properly impressed. "that, like bridge, golf has to be depressed.

"I suppose," she said reluctantly, "that like bridge, golf has to be played."

"I will be around at ten."

This threw a spasm of pain over her delicate features. "Ten! That's the middle of the night for me! I don't begin to get sleepy until eight."

"All wrong." By now the lordly dictating, inevitably intimate tone was fully established. "Bad habits from your house-party days that you've got to break yourself of. I'll be around at ten."

Of course, he was cutting classes to do it. And an interesting autopsy, too,

WAS any girl worth a man's business hours? That was the question that faced him when he started for Sally Parsons' the next morning in his mother's sedan. (Living at home had its advantages.)

He looked forward to seeing her again—looked forward with interest and with dread. This dread always must come where there is sufficient interest—dread that it will not continue to be interesting.

Early in the morning, after a dance where one has made an impression, is a wary time. And Bob had a great curiosity to see the beautiful, if aged, cigarette fiend under the morning sun. He wanted to see if she wore sport clothes sensibly or ruined them by slapping on too much rouge, which always showed up a girl as having no sense of proportion—same thing as having no sense of humor.

The shock of seeing each other by day for the first time was forgotten in his quick rush of emotion when he reached the Parsons estate. Sally and Alice were sitting on the front steps smoking like two little chimneys.

His greeting was stiff. Sally left them alone together at once, with no tact at all, which embarrassed him excessively, but Alice did not even blush.

No, she was not rouged. On the contrary, she was very pale; only her lips were vividly edged with crimson. (He did not know that the latest New York style was for alabaster complexion and a "mouth like a crimson pomegranate—red enemy of men that never sleeps.")

"Sally lent me some clubs, or whatever you call them," she said; "come on."

Thus easily did she bridge the situation that had left him so helpless.

In the car decision returned, and he threw her box and matches out of the window. This caused a slight uppishness between them which lasted until they got out on the links.

He had never taught any one to play golf before. He had always sworn he never would. With the restraint of a gentleman he had refrained from telling Alice that, the evening before, when she brought forth the fact that she had promised herself never to learn.

As a matter of fact, she learned with amazing speed. He was delighted by her quickness in receiving his intelligent, lucid instructions. After the first few holes her drive swung clear, and although she smeared brassy shots and chafed at the midiron, her putts were fairly accurate. It did seem as if she must have watched the game a great deal; she said she thought her tennis probably helped her.

Halfway around the course she lost her absorption in the game and became nervous—fidgeting, twiddling with her stick, finally demanding if he hadn't brought along any cigarettes for himself. On his proud negative, she horrified him by turning to the little caddies and asking them if they had anything to smoke on their persons.

They were startled, being Boston little boys, and informed her that neither of them had even a chew.

"Oh Hades!" she sighed. "I don't think I can go on with it; honestly, Bob, I don't."

Violent exercise was the thing. He told the caddies to take the clubs in, and seized her arm. "We are going to walk over the rest of the course," he said, "fast."

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A MAN was always stronger than a woman. With his arm propelling her along, what could she do but yield, which she did rather gracefully; and alone they paced over the links, leaving the caddies to gape and level profanity upon the defenseless golf bags.

Almost without realizing it, however, their speed abated when they came to the next tee and a rustic bench invited. The two veterans were in the midst of a discussion of whether they thought all their experience should be regretted or not.

"If I were to do it over again," said Bob darkly, "I would be different, in some ways, of course; but on the whole, I think experience is invaluable."

They sat on the rustic bench.

"It is, for the girl as well as the man," said Adamantine Alice. "Unless a girl goes about and flits around as much as possible, she's helpless—especially helpless," she added thoughtfully, "in choosing the man she wants to marry."

That, of course, brought them down—or up—to the subject of love, which they treated intensively until the sun stood above them and exclaimed. They had not finished their discussion; interesting words were still flying around, and Bob asked Alice, as they struggled back over the links, to have luncheon with him at the club. She shook her head.

"I've an engagement in town, and then I'm going over to the stadium for the game."

He said nothing for a few minutes. Somehow he had never pictured her with other men, from the first moment he had known her. Now, her nickname, which last night's debutante had lisped in his car, returned to haunt him with meaning. Adamantine Alice! A girl who for years had sustained reputation and power—who was still beautiful.

"How old are you?" he demanded, suddenly.

She laughed. "I am at the age that the novelists always put their heroines—they start 'em now, when I'm finishing."

"What d'you mean, finishing?" he demanded. He was suddenly suspicious of the man to whom she was going that afternoon. That man was even probably the reason why Alice was visiting Sally. Girls of Alice's age and composition did not visit other girls for sheer love of seeing them and going to hen parties. He knew.

He became silent and gloomy.

"What's the matter?" she said idly as they neared the clubhouse.

He quickly thought a good thought. "I was thinking that you'd probably undo everything we've accomplished this morning by smoking all the afternoon with that other man."

She turned to him with a swift, soft smile that brought greater shock of joy because it sat so strangely on her disdainful features.

"Let me tell you something; I'm not going to smoke again until this evening. I'll wait until I see you after the wedding, and give you a chance to talk me out of it. I want to show you that I appreciate what you've done for me; I've—I've really not noticed the lack of it much, this morning."

First victory flushed Bob in painful delight that left him without power to speak. He contemplated this fact in alarm that grew more melancholy with the realization that he was really enjoying these sensations. • • • He was in the foaming rapids, and so swiftly pulled along that he hardly knew he struggled!

There is little more cheerless than an afternoon where all is bright and beautiful outside, and you have nothing to do but think about the object of your interest who is out with another man. Bob moped, and tried to study. He had forgotten all about the fact that he should be decorating the church, helping the simpering bridesmaids.

* * * *

THE byplays and cross-currents of a wedding are so much more interesting than the two over whom all the fuss is presumably made. There are generally those in the wedding party who are having their own little affairs, by the time of the wedding, and who regard the two who have made these affairs possible with kindly pity, if they regard them at all. Poor, stuffy pair! All their fun over. Rushing into their fools' paradise, while angels hesitate outside.

So Alice and Bob smiled upon the bride and groom in superior manner that evening, and withdrew themselves to a corner of the piazza that was far from the laughter and glittering banalities of the wedding reception.

She was mystically delightful in green—so pale and haunting it resembled the moon filtered on tender June lawns. Her eyes were no longer tired, impersonal; they held a spark in them that deepened when she turned to him.

"I can smoke now, can't I?" she said with sweet, childlike directness.

He looked unhappy. "I wish you wouldn't. I want you to pay some attention to me tonight. So far it's been too one-sided."

"Double standard is my motto," she murmured, and looked away from him.

"You're right, I suppose," he conceded. "There are certain things that men have to take the initiative in. May I come and see you tomorrow?"

She did not tremble an eyelash. "I'm going back to New York tomorrow."

Chaos crashed about him. "I thought—I thought you said last night—that you didn't know how long you were going to stay."

"I didn't," she said sweetly, "but I do now. I found out today."

The other man! There was no time—no time for finesse. No time for any method but the simple and direct!

"I'm coming to New York to see you. You've got to keep on, you know, with this cigarette fight."

"I know," she said gently, and put out a nervous hand—which he took.

"We were talking about love," he said, in tones that he would not have believed could issue from his lips, "and I've discovered something—that a person—can fall for another person—right away. That it's not—a question of time! Can you imagine that?"

Mirth that he could not understand came shaking from her lips. "I can—imagine it."

He held her hand more firmly. "I mean—I mean to court you from now on," he specified, and committed himself with: "Do you hear?"

She heard.

The courting was really all over, but he did not know it and never would.

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Saharan Nitrates.

THE nitrates of Chile are the largest known to exist, and are one of the greatest sources of that country's prosperity. Their exhaustion would mean disaster to Chile and a great loss to the world. But it has been suggested that Africa might compete with Chile, if not take the place of that country, in this industry. Experts are said to be convinced that nitrate deposits even more extensive than those of South America exist all over the western part of the Sahara. It would cost more to get the product to the coast than it costs in Chile, but it is averred that this extra expense of transportation would only counterbalance the high export duty imposed on Chilean nitrates.

Flax Cultivation.

THE hope has always been held out by the Department of Agriculture that the raising of flax of a fine quality may become an important industry in our country. Experiments in this direction have, it is said, proved most successful around Puget Sound, in the state of Washington. The soil and the climate there are held to be equal for flax raising to those of the best flax-producing regions of Europe. Puget Sound flax has been experimented with at one of the great linen factories in Ireland and found to be of excellent quality.

Saving Lives With Cannon.

SAVING people's lives by shooting at them with a cannon sounds paradoxical, but that is the first step in the method of rescue followed by life saving stations throughout the world.

When a ship runs on a shoal near shore, life savers shoot an iron projectile attached to a coil of rope or fine steel cable over a cross arm of the vessel by means of a small brass cannon. Those aboard the ship haul in the rope to which is attached a heavier one. The heavy rope is stoutly secured at both ends and, by a breeches buoy, the passengers are permitted to coast to the shore and to safety, one at a time.

A Curious Apparatus.

THE Zeiss optical works at Jena have put out a rather curious form of apparatus. A so-called iron arc—that is, an electric arc with its carbons impregnated with salts of iron, giving out a light rich in ultra-violet rays—is used with screens, so as to cut off all the heating and luminous rays, leaving none but ultra-violet invisible radiations. In these pure ultra-violet radiations nearly all substances fluoresce, and the light they give out is greatly affected by the degree of their purity, thus providing means of examining the chemical purity of substances.